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Contact: Amanda Jones  
Office: 504-507-7635  
Cell: 225-252-7122  
[amanda.jones6@va.gov](mailto:amanda.jones6@va.gov)

## **New Orleans VA recognizes September as Suicide Prevention Month** *#BeThere Campaign Urges Our Community to Support Veterans*

NEW ORLEANS – In observance of Suicide Prevention Month, the Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System is bringing awareness to its **#BeThere** campaign by encouraging community leaders, colleagues, and Veterans’ families and friends to help prevent suicide by showing support for those who may be going through a difficult time.

Suicide is a complex national public health issue that affects communities nationwide, with more than 45,000 Americans, including more than 6,000 Veterans, dying by suicide every year. But suicide is preventable. VA is using a community-driven approach to prevent suicide and finding innovative ways to deliver support and care to all 20 million U.S. Veterans whenever and wherever they need it.

“At the Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System, we are committed to serving our Veterans and we have strong mental health and suicide prevention programs to support Veterans in need, but we know that only about a third of Veterans come to VA for health care,” said Medical Center Director Fernando Rivera. “That’s why community involvement is so important. We want our community to feel empowered in their vital role of suicide prevention because just one act of thoughtfulness can make a big difference and may even save a life.”

You don’t need special training to prevent suicide. Everyone can play a role by learning to recognize warning signs, showing compassion and care to Veterans in need, and offering your support. Here are some actions anyone can take to **Be There**:

- Reach out to the Veterans in your life to show them you care. Send a check-in text, cook them dinner, or simply ask, “How are you?”
- Educate yourself on the warning signs of suicide, found on the [Veterans Crisis Line website](#).
- Watch the free [S.A.V.E. training video](#) to equip yourself to respond with care and compassion if someone you know indicates they are having thoughts of suicide.
- Check out [VA’s Social Media Safety Toolkit](#) to learn how to recognize and respond to social media posts that may indicate emotional distress, feelings of crisis or thoughts of suicide.
- Contact VA’s [Coaching Into Care](#) program if you are worried about a Veteran loved one. A licensed psychologist or social worker will provide guidance on motivating your loved one to seek support.

*Veterans who are in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, and those who know a Veteran in crisis, can call the Veterans Crisis Line for confidential support available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, text to 838255 or chat online at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat).*

*Reporters covering this issue can download [VA's Safe Messaging Best Practices](#) fact sheet or visit [www.ReportingOnSuicide.org](http://www.ReportingOnSuicide.org) for important guidance on how to communicate about suicide.*

For more information about the new Veterans medical center, clinic locations and other services available to Veterans in southeast Louisiana, visit the website [www.neworleans.va.gov](http://www.neworleans.va.gov), Facebook at [www.facebook.com/VANewOrleans](https://www.facebook.com/VANewOrleans) or Twitter at [www.twitter.com/vaneworleans](https://www.twitter.com/vaneworleans) or Instagram at [www.instagram.com/vaneworleans](https://www.instagram.com/vaneworleans).

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